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JUST BOYS IN SHOLAPUR

By REV. L. HENRY GATES

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
for FOREIGN MISSIONS 14 Beacon St. Boston

• A QUARTERLY •

Foreword

This racy account of a Boys' Boarding and Day School in one of the interior cities on the table land of Western India will appeal to many readers.

For it deals with boys ; with all kinds of them ; the eager and the lazy, the studious and the mischievous ; those from good homes and those from no homes at all. It describes them at their studies, at work and at play. It shows how they are handled and how they respond and that, underneath all their surface differences from American lads, they are after all "just boys."

In Sunday Schools, in Christian Endeavor societies, in Boys' Clubs, and in a host of homes where are boys and those who love them, this number of the *Envelope Series* is sure to be welcomed. It needs only to be introduced.

Pass it on.

W. E. S.

Just Boys at Sholapur.

BY REV L. HENRY GATES
of Sholapur, West India.

“Will all those who think we should lock Taya up in a dark room over night and not let him go to the fire works this evening, raise their hands?” The question was before the assembly of boys in their hall, and concerned a boy of perhaps thirteen years who had repeatedly disobeyed rules in running away into the city, and playing “hookey” from school. He was comparatively a new boy and the superintendent was disposed to leniency in the matter, except for the fact that the boy had been warned again and again. In the conviction that the playmates and others in the Boarding Department would pass the best judgment, the case was referred to them in council. There was much discussion upon the question, pro and con. Finally, just as the vote was about to be taken, one of the older boys, seeing Taya weeping and begging for mercy, arose and offered to stay in company with the boy and keep him in custody, while the other boys went to enjoy the display of rockets, wheels, and other remarkable exhibitions of fire works. It furnished a merciful alternative to the other mode of treatment, and was immediately put as a motion and seconded. The sentiment of the boys veered

to the alternative motion, and the first was lost by a large majority. So do boys know how to handle boys ; and it becomes a man to be a youth again when dealing with youngsters.

At present there are about seventy-five in the Boarding Department of the Sholapur Boys' School, ranging from seven and eight up to twenty years of age. The smallest ones attend model kindergarten classes taught by young women trained in kindergarten methods. Most of the others are enrolled in the Mission Vernacular and Anglo-Vernacular Schools ; while five or six work all day in the carpenter shop in payment of a prospective course in the Municipal High School, and only one or two have already entered the coveted courses in the High School.



Carpentry Class.



Boys and Men at Leper Asylum.

They are all Mission boys ; some inherited by the Mission, some born into that heritage, while others have been adopted. They come from the many villages and towns in the Sholapur District. A few have been thrown upon the Mission because the parents did not want them, or because they could not support their own children. In asking us to take charge of them, in most cases they renounce all claim to them. Three or four have been under the discriminating care of a "Sally McBride" and been supported by a kind and generous "Daddy Longlegs" whom they have never seen. They have almost been forgotten now as the one-time orphans ! But they show their careful bringing-up. We might separate another group of them and classify them as the untainted children of lepers from the Leper Asylum. The Mission agents in the different villages of the district send their boys to be

educated at their "alma mater." One such preacher has been able to support and educate four promising boys, one of whom, Prbhakar, is now a coming teacher in the Anglo-Vernacular School, and still another, Dinkar, is making good in the Municipal High School. Sometimes it is considered best to take children entirely away from the influence of their environment, which includes the home and parents, as well as the tribe and caste, and accordingly there are those who have been sent by missionaries and well-wishers from other districts that they might have the advantage of favorable surroundings.

One such case occurred not long ago. Samuel came to us from one of the large cities. He is a Bene Israel boy, with an Indian Mother and a father of Jewish extraction. It was the first time (he was only twelve years of age) he had been away from his home, and he shed tears of homesickness when he was met at the station and brought up by one or two of the older boys. His parents wished to put him under distinct Christian influence and training, as is stated in the following card that came from the father a day or two after the boy arrived:

November 22nd, 1915.

Sir:—"As God planned, my only one son in the twin Master Lion, aged 10 years, has been sent to you by——(name of patron) and her thick associate members this day for the best Christian Training."

(Now notice what a prodigy was thrown into the camp of normal children, for as the letter proceeds.)

“Now it remains with you to give him the Special Course of Marathi Reading, Writing, Singing and Ciphering just to make him fit for the Third Reading Book next January, 1916, and after six months — for the fourth Reading Book and the English Education (which regularly begins in the fifth standard or grade.)”

(All this, of course, is to be done by the most up-to-date psychological methods and formulæ, for)

“If you will kindly try to read his Phrenology, Physiognomy and Graphology, you must discover as the most promising boy to turn him out the President of America as James Garfield, Abraham Lincoln and others.

“May God inspire you to satisfy my high aspirations and bless us all in all respects in triumphs, Amen.

I remain, yours faithfully, etc.”

This seemed to the superintendent a new inspiration, and he wondered if the young men and women of the United States had ever been brought to consider this as a reason for going to the “foreign fields” — in order to raise up future presidents for the “land of the free and home of the brave;” and he also wondered why “new Kaisers for Germany, Czars for Russia, and Sultans for Turkey” were not also included! This is a new idea of the international cosmopolitanism that might prevail, thought he! And why not, American cities are already employing “ready made” mayors and counsellors from other parts of the United States. In preparation for his

future career, the boy had already acquired a necessary accomplishment, according to worldly standards, of all rulers, that of borrowing money! "Samuel" was placed in the First Standard when he came. After five months of study he is still in that same standard! He has not been supplied the rails to split or the mule for the tow-path as yet!

Samuel has not shown caliber of an *ordinary* boy from a poor family in a village, who went to the head of the class the very day he was placed in the Fourth Standard and has made steady, and sometimes brilliant, advances in honesty and studiousness. Narayan, another youth, was just naturally found! In the morning, while on an errand at the station a servant noticed him on the platform, and recognized him again in the afternoon. He became interested and engaged him in conversation sufficiently to find out that he had been on his way up to Bombay with an uncle in faith that he was to be taught a trade in the metropolis. On arriving at Sholapur, both alighted for the ten or fifteen minutes that the train waited, but at the end of that time, the uncle was not to be found, and the train went along without him. What to do, he did not know. He was only twelve years old. With a little persuasion Narayan accompanied the servant to the Mission compound with his bundle of clothing. It is a pity that a camera did not "snap" him that day he came. After three or four days the authorities of the Boarding Department were very ready to "snap him up," for during those days that he had lived with the servant,



Four Specimens.

1. (Standing, with cap) Lion Samuel, thought by his father to be capable of becoming President of U. S.
2. (Sitting, with turban) Narayan, found at the railway station; developing finely.
3. (Sitting, with cap) Ratan, an orphan, partly supported by C. E. Societies of Sholapur.
4. (Standing, with turban) Dugadoo, the studious. His name, like Peter's, means "rock."

he had shown himself well behaved and teachable. Besides he was a high-caste boy and promised well. He was bright looking and attractive. We found he had been in school in the Kanarese-speaking country and had studied up to the fourth standard, and also had a "smattering" of English. He had the added accomplishment of being able to speak and understand Marathi.

Because he did not know his letters in the latter tongue, however, he was obliged to enter the First Standard. He was a willing student, and very soon became proficient with his books and slate. Yet where had he learned his manners! He was better mannered, by far, than those who had been in the Boarding Department for several years. This ought to be said in justice to the boy, although it throws but little credit on the dormitory life in the compound. A week or two after he had come, there was a picnic or tea-party for the church people. Narayan saw his opportunity, and of his own accord with characteristic willingness and grace waited upon the men and women with tea and rolls and biscuits. His father had died, and his mother had been keeping a tobacco shop in Bangalore. So only recently it was discovered that he had been secretly smoking the little Indian cigarettes. How nice; he was not a "goody-goody" after all! He has fallen into Christian ways however, and has been very teachable and adaptable.

The school buildings are about half a mile distant from the compound and thither the boys wend their way in double file at a little after seven o'clock every week day

morning. Both teachers and scholars have so learned to modulate their harsh voices and suppress the noise that they can sit in adjoining rooms. The auditory aspect of



Leap Frog in India.

the place is not so like a menagerie as it used to be, but still there is no need of dictaphones leading to the principal's room! Except for fifteen minutes of recess there they sit on the bare stone floor with slates and books neatly arranged in front of each one, learning reading, writing, singing, arithmetic, geography, etc., until eleven-thirty. After the noon meal in the mess hall under the big, spreading tree in the Boarding School Compound, the boys have a little time for rest until one o'clock, when they start their four hours' work in the "Karkhana."

Karkhana is the vernacular word meaning "factory," which includes the carpentry and weaving shops and the sewing room.

All the boys except the young ones who are in the sewing class spend one of the four hours in the drawing class each afternoon. Thus each boy gets five hours of class-room work and three of manual training. Those from eight or nine years of age up to thirteen and fourteen, who are not yet strong enough to wield the saw and plane, work at the looms and make cloth serviceable for the garments that they demand. Many of the Christian community also patronize our weaving department. The boys do the best work they can upon seven rickety wooden looms, that require repairs almost every day. The inspector says it is good practice for them, for if ever one's loom out in his village becomes dilapidated he will know how to mend it! We are living in hope of funds with



By the Work Shops.

which to invest in two or three of Mr. Churchill's looms when they are put on the market.

In the same quadrangle with the weaving shed is the long carpenter shop, where the older, stronger boys learn to use their hands and tools in practical ways. One Mission School was in need of dumb bells for drill purposes ; and an order for eighteen pair was filled, the boys making them on the single foot power lathe of which the carpenter shop boasts. Another order for half a dozen dining room chairs was complied with. Among the articles that have been made, are boxes, tables, chairs, cupboards, all sorts of repair work, yes, and even a coffin. This is another department in which Narayan, the boy whose story I have related above, is adept. When first placed in the shop, he picked up the tools and began to handle them deftly and skillfully, as though he had been brought up to the trade of a carpenter.

It may be said that carpentry and weaving are the most common trades among the Indians. At the recent government inspection and examination of the Industrial School, every boy but one, in both departments obtained a passing mark.

Thursday afternoons the boys attend the weekly prayer meeting ; but on other days they engage in games and pastimes including cricket, tag, artya-partya, basket ball, etc. Artya-partya is an Indian game that requires and develops great nimbleness and skill, besides being one that



can be played by young and old, boys and girls. It is a game which American boys and girls are sure to enjoy. Cricket is a favorite with the boys. The English inspectors who came to examine the Industrial Department, watched the boys in a cricket match and were greatly surprised at their skill and knowledge of the game. Only recently has a ball been provided for the American game of basket ball. Fortunately the Mission compound is very large and furnishes fields for a variety of out-door games. The boys need greatly gymnastic and athletic apparatus. They do not get enough exercise. They are just as full of life as can be and are apt to get into mischief when they have no proper vent for their energies.

The Indian boy likes music just as his father and mother and sisters do. The drum is the chief musical instrument, and it has a true fascination for him. At the time of a "kirtan" or popular concert, two youths not more than seven years old have been noticed beating and fingering their chests a la drumming in tune with the drum that supplied music. There is nothing quite so popular in the Boarding Department as the little hand-organ or harmonica and the two drums, and the boys like nothing better than to gather about these on a Sunday afternoon or evening,



when they have nothing else to do, and sing by the hour. The Indian boy is not like some American boys. He feels ashamed *not* to sing. You do not have to coax him to sing in school. On Sundays these boys sing in Sunday School, at their noon Christian Endeavor meetings, and again at the afternoon church service; and then they hurry through their evening meal in order to sit in the light of a poor oil lamp and sing for two hours before bed-time.

Some of the boys have become quite expert musicians; and two or three times during the year they have prepared, practised and given musical entertainments, the proceeds of which were to go for the benefit of some religious activity.

They not only enjoy music: music is such a part of their every day life that it is one of the best avenues for teaching them lessons of morality and religion. Their own "saints" instruct them through the medium of song. Coolies and burden-bearing women can be heard lustily singing tunes as they walk along the roads. The shastris sit down by the road and intone their messages of comfort, encouragement, and truth for the passer-by, who is almost always willing to stop and listen. The Indian will



eagerly listen and take to heart the teaching that is conveyed in song and rythm when he would be as indifferent to the average sermon as the proverbial snoring deacon in America. Many have advocated that the Gospel story be set to meter and sung for the benefit of the Indian people. It is encouraging, therefore, to see the boys and young men so earnestly and thoughtfully cultivating their talents for music.

Fortunately the church of about six hundred members have a native pastor who preaches and talks so that the children can understand. They enjoy sitting on the hard stone floor, listening to his Sunday afternoon sermons. His illustrations are so simple and yet so effective. He is not afraid to raise a laugh from the younger ones by his manner in the pulpit. He seems to act especially for their benefit, and he makes the hour interesting for them, so that it is not irksome to go to church. It is a virile, strong religion which he preaches; but one day it verily surprised even him, not to say the other people in the building, to hear the boys and girls, some of them not more than thirteen years old, arise in weekly prayer meeting and offer voluntary sentence prayers in answer to a call for prayers. They have done it frequently since, and they do it naturally and reverently, too. The religious side of the boy's nature is by no means neglected. Bible stories are taught him in the daily school for three-quarters of an hour each day. Each one of the older boys learns to ask grace and offer thanks before his mates for the daily food that is provided. As has been said before, the Sabbath is full of opportunities for worship



Missionaries and Teachers of the Boys' Vernacular and Anglo-Vernacular Schools.
 Back Row. — Carpenter Master; 1st Standard, A-V.; 3d St. A-V.; Boarding School Master;
 4th St. V.; Weaving Master.
 Middle Row. — Drawing Teacher; Rev. L. S. Gates; Rev. L. Henry Gates; Mrs. L. H. Gates;
 Mrs. L. S. Gates.
 Front Row. — 3d St. V.; 2nd St. A-V.; 1st St. V.; 2nd St. V.

and praise, of which they all take advantage; and it is interesting and encouraging to watch their spiritual lives grow as they rise and take part in the Christian Endeavor prayer meetings.

The boys are in their late teens when they finish the third standard of the Anglo-Vernacular School. They have received just enough instruction in the English language to desire more, and not enough to be proficient in



Boys' Dormitories, Sholapur.

talking it. If they have been with us for more than five years, they have, each one of them, received in addition to the cost of tuition, between three hundred and twelve hundred rupees for his maintenance, i. e. between one hundred and four hundred dollars. Twenty-five dollars seems a small sum on which to support a boy for a whole year, outside of his tuition, but when there are sixty or

seventy of them the total mounts up. There are many kind patrons in the United States who have taken an interest in individual ones and have undertaken the support of them. It is a personal and satisfactory way of giving. There are many worthy children, however, who have no "kind friends." The parents are too poor to pay anything for their expenses, and the superintendent has to make the appropriation from the Board go as far as he possibly can. This year the war has eaten away the ordinary government grants that can be counted on for perhaps a third of the expense of the schools and the missionary is "up a tree," but he cannot see his own or any other ship in sight.

When a boy gets two or three years of English, he wants more. They will need it if they expect to enter any lucrative employment under a sahib or the government. Therefore they plead and plead that they may be allowed to enter the municipal high school. Ordinarily a deaf ear has to be turned towards all such requests on account of lack of funds. Sometimes there are bright scholars who would make good in mission service or anywhere else if they could have a little more education, but they must be turned off. The Mission does encourage them to enter the Normal School, for we have need of qualified teachers, but this is not to their liking, because they are obliged to forego any further instruction in English. Since the Mission has paid so much already for their education, it feels justified in training them for its own work, and when they do enter its service to pay them

lower salaries to compensate, in a small way, for what the Mission expended for them. If they were given the privilege of going to the High School, they might feel free to shift for themselves, and their services lost to the Mission.

When they find the road to the High School barred and shut, some of them give in and go to the Normal School conducted by the Mission at Ahmednagar. A picture of four such boys who entered the Normal School



The School's Product.

Four boys, all bright and ambitious, who went this year to the Normal School at Ahmednagar.

is printed herewith. Others are found some employment in the Sholapur cotton mills, in the railway service or elsewhere. The most unpromising boys either decide to go to their villages and work for their relatives, or they are trained by the missionaries for house servants. Work has been found for three or four this year in a printing establishment in Poona.

The writer maintains that "boys will be boys," whether you call them Tom, Dick or Harry, or name them Taya,

Dinker, or Hari. Richard is just as likely to pull the girls' hair as is Ratan. Bhau can swing the cricket bat as well, if not better, than Bob can slug the base ball. Dugadoo studies his daily lessons better than I ever saw Peter do. It was he who put the boys of his grade up to asking the principal if they could not have a special room in the dormitory for themselves, so that they would not disturb the others when they arose in the early morning to study the lessons for the day. On the other hand, no one can beat Shumuel in shirking work! Then there are mollycoddles and bullies that can spoil the game in India, as well as in America, but you will go far before you find a group of boys that are more reverent and courteous than those in Indian parts. "Boys will be boys" if you give them half a chance. The boys in India do not get half the chance that American boys enjoy. Let us hope that they will some day, as they learn to follow the same Master that invites and blesses American children.

THE BOYS' SCHOOL described in the preceding article is but one of the educational institutions at Sholapur. Toward all this branch of mission work at Sholapur the American Board appropriates

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only a small fraction of which is definitely pledged.

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